The WWII Japanese American Resettlement: New Research

Saturday, September 29, 2018

10am- 4pm

Hosted by the USC Shinso Ito Center for Japanese Religions and Cultures

Schedule and Presenter Abstracts
10:00 AM  The WWII Japanese American Resettlement: New Research Workshop
East Asian Seminar Room (110C)
Doheny Memorial Library

Coffee, tea, and breakfast pastries

10:10 AM  WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS by Duncan Williams

Session 1: Historiography and Sources for the Study of “Resettlement”

Brian Niiya (Densho)

11:15 AM  “From the National Archives to Local Libraries: ‘Finding Home Again’ and the Archives on Resettlement in Los Angeles”
Kristen Hayashi (JANM)

12:00 PM  “Cautionary Tales, Found Images and Missing Gaps: Lessons Learned from Life After Manzanar Photographic Survey”
Naomi Hirahara (Author)

12:45 –1:45PM  Lunch break

Session II: Resettlement in the Midwest

1:45 PM  “What Happens to a Dream Conferred?: Japanese American Race, Place, and Space in Chicago, 1945-1965”
Lisa Doi (Community Activist)

2:30 PM  “Centering the Midwest in the Resettlement Narrative: Recent Public History Initiatives in Chicago”
Ryan Yokota (Japanese American Service Committee)

3:15 PM  “The Role of Narrative Film in Education: Making JA Chicago Resettlement Resonate with a 5th Grader”
Jason Matsumoto (Producer, Full Spectrum Features)
Session I: Historiography and Sources for the Study of “Resettlement”

Dispersal, Renewal, and the Roots of a "Model Minority": A Historiography of Japanese American "Resettlement" and Return

Brian Niiya (Densho)

Though an understudied period in Japanese American history relative to eventful World War II years, there is still a substantial if uneven literature on the "resettlement" period, the decade or so after West Coast Japanese Americans exited the wartime concentration camps they had been held in during the war years. This attempt at a historiography of this literature will examine not only the various waves of academic literature, but also popular studies, community publications, memoirs, literature, and film/video in a bid to understand how we got to where we are today with regard to our understanding of this time period.

From the National Archives to Local Libraries: "Finding Home Again" and the Archives on Resettlement in Los Angeles

Kristen Hayashi (JANM)

Kristen Hayashi will provide an overview of the historical material that she has discovered while conducting archival research on housing, employment, and public assistance as these topics related to resettlement in Los Angeles, immediately after the West Coast was reopened to persons of Japanese ancestry in 1945. She'll discuss the types of materials that she has come across at the National Archives, Smithsonian, Japanese American National Museum, UCLA, UC Berkeley Bancroft Library, Southern California Library, and Huntington Library. She will also identify various challenges inherent to researching the historical materials that are key to telling this history.

Cautionary Tales, Found Images and Missing Gaps: Lessons Learned from Life After Manzanar Photographic Survey

Naomi Hirahara (Author)

In 2015, the non-profit publisher Heyday, in conjunction with the Manzanar History Association, received a Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant to produce a book on what happened to those imprisoned in Manzanar after they were released. Heather Lindquist, an exhibition developer and author of Children of Manzanar, and author Naomi Hirahara co-wrote the book, which was re-titled Life after Manzanar and published in April 2018. As the book was designed for the general public, more than 100 photos were included in its publication. Hirahara will present the behind-the-scenes struggles to locate appropriate images and then obtain appropriate permission for their
use. She will also briefly touch upon observations of the very early "resettlement" period in Chicago as it relates to a new fictional work-in-progress.

**Session II: Resettlement in the Midwest**

What Happens to a Dream Conferred?: Japanese American Race, Place, and Space in Chicago, 1945-1965

**Lisa Doi** (Community Activist)

Just 20 years after World War II ended, Japanese Americans were trumpeted as the model minority. This rapid turnaround in public perception was catalyzed by a possessive investment in whiteness that led to material and social “success.” I use Japanese Americans in Chicago as the model city for this exploration of the model minority. However, I also challenge the costs of this success for both those inside and outside the community. How have intra-ethnic social relations been challenged through these plays at whiteness? What was lost with the fall of Chicago’s Little Tokyo? How has the model minority narrative furthered anti-black logics? Finally, I theorize a praxis of liberation history as a redress for and reclamation of respectability history.

Centering the Midwest in the Resettlement Narrative: Recent Public History Initiatives in Chicago

**Ryan Yokota** (Japanese American Service Committee)

Studies of Japanese American World War II incarceration history have often neglected to focus on the pivotal period of wartime and postwar resettlement and the myriad ways in which local communities struggled with the difficulties of building their lives anew in the aftermath of racial and military exclusion and incarceration. In addition, often ignored in the west coast centric lens of Asian American Studies, the local Chicago Japanese American community merits particular attention, due to the way in which it was the largest community of those wartime and postwar Japanese Americans that left the camps, and thus must be understood as a community that was entirely political in origin, having grown from a prewar population of only 400 Japanese Americans to over 20,000 by the end of the war. This presentation will focus on two recent public history initiatives that deal with the Japanese American community of Chicago, the first being the Nikkei Chicago website and Facebook community, and the second being the recent exhibit, Then They Came For Me: Incarceration of Japanese Americans During WWII and the Demise of Civil Liberties, which ran last year at the Alphawood Gallery in Chicago, Illinois, and later traveled to the International Center of Photography in New York City, New York. Through an exploration of the nuances and challenges of these two initiatives, this presentation will point towards further future public history proposals that seek to not only address the complexity of postwar Japanese American experience, but also translate an awareness of these issues for a new generation, and in conversation with contemporary issues.
The Role of Narrative Film in Education: Making JA Chicago Resettlement Resonate with a 5th Grader

Jason Matsumoto (Producer, Full Spectrum Features)

This presentation will outline Full Spectrum Features' approach to empathic engagement through narrative films for the purpose of educating students about the history and contemporary relevance of Japanese American incarceration. By reviewing the results from our first digital media project, The Orange Story, we will present our roadmap for optimizing resonance amongst diverse student populations through our second project which focuses on the resettlement phase of Japanese American WWII incarceration.